

By Kevin Raub

SOAP STARS

Lather up naturally

Although I plan on covering shower gels at some point in the future of this column, I can't help but admit I still prefer bar soaps. The addition of a loofah to my morning shower routine is more than a tad emasculating, not to mention the wife always finds a way to complain about how I use it, rinse it or restore it. And that's okay. I'm not really supposed to know how to properly use, let alone care for, a loofah. For those reasons, bar soaps still rule the roost in my (our) shower. The bad guys in traditional bar soaps have unpronounceable names like PEG-6 methyl ether, butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), or tetrasodium EDTA, the latter of which enhances the penetration of the other bad chemicals into your skin. So, dump the Irish Spring in favor of this new round of yummy smelling and good-for-your-skin natural bar soaps.


Aubrey Organics's soap formerly known as the G'Day **Eucalyptus Bath Bar** is now the Eucalyptus Glycerin Shower/Bath Bar. I have mixed feelings about vegetable glycerin-based soaps: I like the way they feel in the shower, and of course love the absence of animal fat, but they never last as long as palm oil or shea butter-based natural soaps. This one is no exception. Aubrey calls on organic rosemary, sage, and eucalyptus oils along with menthol for a little kick, but it's too subtle for my taste. I want these things to shock me out of slumber in the morning with an invigorating blast of powerful aromatics and tingly oils. This one just doesn't cut it. If you are going to use eucalyptus, I want to see my shower turn into a righteous, spa-like steam room!

www.aubrey-organics.com

Giovanni Cosmetics's Bathe Body Bars are organic bar soaps that I just love. First of all, the line—some 10 soaps in all—comes in all kinds of yummy flavors like Exfoliating Cool Mint Lemonade and Grapefruit Sky. Admittedly, those are not the manliest in the line, so I prefer to scrub down with Tea Tree Triple Threat. It offers a rousing cocktail of certified organic tea tree, peppermint, eucalyptus, rosemary, nettle, and thyme oils (and chamomile, in case this is a night shower we're discussing). Good stuff. Or there's the Bamboo Birch, a little subtler with certified organic birch bark, Echinacea, and hibiscus. Best of all? The scents and oils stick around to the end, which is a lot more than I can say for most of my ex-girlfriends.

www.giovannicosmetics.com

For as long as I can remember, cedar has been my favorite scent. It reminds me of childhood, the great outdoors, sleeping in the forest, and that time I lost my virginity at summer camp. But seriously, cedar emits a man's man aroma, like motor oil, turpentine, or a two-day old pizza box. For that reason, the French-imported **Whole Foods Organic Vetiver Cedar Triple Milled Soap** is my favorite here. It's laced with woody cedar as well as vetiver, a wild grass native to India, used here as an essential oil. Its shea butter and palm oil base is Fair Trade and sustainable, the former organic, as well. In the morning it makes me feel like a lumberjack ready to walk off into the wild. Also, at eight ounces, this soap is super-sized and lasts far longer than most organic bar soaps on the market. The press notes also say it's "supportive and grounding," two things a sensitive and cocky boy like myself could just might use. www.wholefoodsmarket.com

Definitely falling under the decadent soap umbrella, **Kenmen** offers a line of supremely interesting, handcrafted 100 percent natural numbers with names as exotic as their ingredients: Bamboozled (Bamboo-Charcoal-Peppermint); Berber Nomad (Grapefruit-Cedar-Star Anise); and Riad Karma (High-French-Lavender-Clary Sage-Rose Clay), to name a few. These are cold-crafted, an old-fashioned, time-consuming method that seals in the essential oils and herbal extracts, resulting in a lower pH balance that dries your skin out less and zero free alkali. Each flavor, some 22 in all, pack a punch. The Berber Nomad, for instance, makes me feel like I'm washing down with licorice (which I like). The downside? These bars are small and oddly shaped, like a perfect square the size of a hockey puck (not a bad thing, but strange by comparison) and they ain't cheap. But it's cool stuff—the Africana Cooperatives line calls on Fair Trade biorganic ingredients that practically employ entire villages. So, your conscience is cleaned, as well. www.kenmen.net 

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